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Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

Summary record of the 16th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 5 November 2007, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. Maleki (Vice-Chairman) ..... (Islamic Republic of Iran)

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Agenda item 34: Comprehensive review of the whole question of peacekeeping operations in all their aspects (*continued*)

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07-58127 (E)

In the absence of Mr. Mohamad (Sudan), Mr. Maleki (Islamic Republic of Iran), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Agenda item 34: Comprehensive review of the whole question of peacekeeping operations in all their aspects (*continued*)

1. **Mr. Kruljević** (Serbia) said that participation in peacekeeping was one of the most important contributions Member States were called upon to make in the common interest, there being no alternative to the United Nations as a collective response mechanism. Serbia's own contributions had thus far been modest, but would gradually be increasing and, with that in mind, his Government had established a training centre for peacekeeping service abroad.

2. There were currently three peacekeeping operations in Europe: in Cyprus, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo and Metohija, and they had proved vital in preventing the resurgence of armed conflicts and in creating the conditions for gradual stabilization. However, the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), a civilian peacekeeping operation, had in eight years failed to ensure security, freedom of movement or the return of internally displaced persons, to improve basic living conditions for the Serbs and other non-Albanians in the province or to redress property-privatization irregularities.

3. Serbia was firmly committed to trying to settle the future status of Kosovo and Metohija peacefully within the ongoing negotiations under the auspices of the Contact Group Troika, but would agree only to solutions acceptable to both sides and approved by the Security Council. Other alternatives, especially unilaterally declared independence and its recognition, would result in unforeseeable consequences for the stability and security of South-East Europe, and indeed Europe as a whole. The UNMIK mandate must remain in force until the Security Council decided otherwise, and any change not approved by Serbia and adopted by the Council was unacceptable. Moreover, any future mission to Serbia would have to cooperate with his Government. Serbia would continue contributing its utmost to the functioning of UNMIK and the Kosovo Force of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

4. **Mr. Salim** (India) observed that the unprecedented surge in peacekeeping operations recently had created enormous challenges, not least because of their unaccustomed danger and complexity and the tools they required.

5. The welcome restructuring of the peacekeeping secretariat in order to improve military planning, management and operational capacities nevertheless still required the establishment of clear, unified command structures, coherence in policy and strategy, and effective coordination and integration. The 2008 midterm review should allow appropriate adjustments to be made at that point.

6. The safety and security of United Nations peacekeepers was of vital concern to troop contributors, who placed their soldiers at risk in pursuit of the United Nations ideal. Reliable operational and tactical intelligence was essential for conducting military operations successfully and for averting potential threats, and the United Nations must improve its capacity for information-sharing with field units. India looked forward to examining the draft security-management-system policy being prepared by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) and the Department of Safety and Security.

7. It also encouraged the Secretary-General to consider consolidating peacekeeping accounts while undertaking administrative reorganization and streamlining, thus providing an opportunity to tackle the selective financing of peacekeeping missions by some Member States and the matter of overdue payments to the troop-contributing countries, most of them from the developing world. Also, the mechanism for consultations between troop-contributing countries, the Security Council and the Secretariat must allow greater scope for meaningful discussions. Troop-contributing countries should be involved early and fully in all aspects and stages of mission planning, and their views must find their way into mission mandates.

8. The draft "capstone doctrine" prepared by DPKO to serve as a practical guide for peacekeeping should focus on planning and deployment and on operational and logistical issues, and Member States must be consulted before its publication in final form.

9. India, as one of the most consistent contributors to United Nations missions in Africa, having participated in almost every major operation there since the inception of peacekeeping, believed that the

peacekeeping capacity of African countries should be enhanced. Yet the real challenge was to strengthen peacekeeping without regionalizing it.

10. Sexual exploitation and abuse by peacekeepers were totally unacceptable. Those with managerial and command responsibilities over the troops must be alerted to the problem, and standards of conduct, training and investigation must be instituted. Careful preparatory training to instil a multicultural and tolerant outlook was as important as swift punitive action after the fact. The new Integrated Training Service should draw on the considerable field experience of the troop-contributing countries. Also, the relevant revisions to the model memorandum of understanding should be implemented as soon as possible.

11. The United Nations bodies involved in security should clarify the various dimensions of security-sector reform. Also, DPKO should ensure that the policy on enhanced rapidly deployable capacities, once adopted, adequately reflected the views of Member States.

12. The role of civilian police in peacekeeping had grown substantially. His delegation looked forward to constructive discussions with the new Police Advisor regarding the utilization of the Standing Police Capacity and its future requirements. The troop-contributing countries should be represented in the senior leadership in the Police Division.

13. India had long included women among its military and police officers in a number of missions, and had provided the first all-female police unit to have served; attached to the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), it had proved effective in reaching out to women and children in that post-conflict environment, in addition to performing its normal duties.

14. His delegation wished to salute all those who had lost their lives while serving in United Nations missions: 115 Indian peacekeepers had died out of the nearly 100,000 troops India had contributed to more than 40 missions over the years.

15. **Mr. Abdelaziz** (Egypt) emphasized the importance of the principles that governed United Nations peacekeeping operations, including the consent of the parties concerned before the deployment of any mission, impartiality, and the use of force only in self-defence. Peacekeeping missions ought to have a clear mandate, be adequately funded and have logistical support. Furthermore, such missions should not interfere in the internal affairs of the countries to which they were deployed.

16. The restructuring of DPKO was not only a response to the increased demand for peacekeeping operations, but a reflection of the fundamental change in the nature of armed conflict in the twenty-first century. Thus it was vital to link that restructuring with the ongoing efforts to develop guiding principles for United Nations peacekeeping operations (the "capstone doctrine"). Future operations should be undertaken in the context of comprehensive peace agreements among all parties to a conflict and of a balanced partnership among all international peacekeeping partners, including the Security Council, the General Assembly, DPKO, the Department of Field Support (DFS), troop-contributing countries, relevant regional organizations, donor countries and the Governments of the countries concerned.

17. Despite the increasing confidence of the international community in the Organization's abilities to undertake peacekeeping operations, he said there were a number of points that his delegation wished to emphasize, including the importance of ensuring the safety and security of peacekeeping troops and of United Nations employees in the field; the need for increased consultations between the Security Council and troop-contributing countries prior to the establishment of a new mission; the vital link between peacebuilding and development in conflict-torn areas; the continued need to take appropriate measures in response to any wrongdoing by peacekeeping personnel; and the need to disseminate a culture of peacekeeping by raising awareness of the role the United Nations played in the maintenance of international peace and security.

18. Welcoming the deployment of the United Nations Light and Heavy Support Packages to the African Union Mission in the Sudan (AMIS) and the establishment of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) in accordance with Security Council resolution 1769 (2007), he said that the Hybrid Operation should have a predominantly African character and the troops should, as far as possible, be sourced from African countries, as called for in that resolution.

19. **Mr. Kariyawasam** (Sri Lanka) said that the diversity and complexity of the many new peacekeeping operations established in recent years presented a challenge, but also provided opportunities for personnel from different regions of the world to work together towards the common goal of maintaining peace and stability and stemming violence. Especially in multidimensional peacekeeping operations, the principles of the Charter must remain the point of departure, and basic principles such as the consent of the parties, non-intervention in internal affairs, and non-use of force as a general rule remained valid and must be observed by peacekeepers.

20. Commendable efforts were being made to compile a comprehensive doctrine and a practical guide to peacekeeping (the "capstone doctrine"), a policy document outlining the lessons learned and the best peacekeeping practices. The troop- and police-contributing countries, however, had to be consulted during the further drafting of the document.

21. Sri Lanka looked forward to the midterm review of the restructuring of DPKO. Clearly, additional resources would be needed and the existing staff and material resources would have to be expanded and reallocated within the Secretariat, in the interests of better management of peacekeeping operations and greater integrity in all aspects of peacekeeping, including troop safety and security, accountability in resource management, and responsible conduct by all categories of United Nations staff and related personnel. The recruitment of more peacekeeping staff should be done transparently so as to ensure fair representation for the troop-contributing developing countries in senior Secretariat positions and at field headquarters.

22. The conduct and discipline of United Nations troops needed to be addressed in view of occurrences of sexual exploitation and abuse. The Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations had done well to revise the model memorandum of understanding in that respect, and those revisions should be incorporated as well into existing memorandums of understanding between the United Nations and troop-contributing countries, with clarification of which issues pertained to the exclusive jurisdiction of Member States and what the role of the Office of Internal Oversight Services should be. Allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse must be investigated speedily, and all preliminary evidence gathered by the Office's investigators should be shared with the Member States concerned as they pursued their own investigations. Throughout, the principle that a person was innocent until proven guilty must be safeguarded, and media sensationalism regarding allegations must be countered until the facts were properly substantiated.

23. While the United Nations Integrated Training Service was doing valuable work, more should be done to strengthen training centres at the national level.

24. **Mr. Muharemi** (Croatia) observed that his country was no stranger to questions relating to peacekeeping. As a former recipient country, it was now proud to be contributing military and police officers to 15 United Nations missions worldwide, to which it brought its unique experience in post-conflict situations. It would soon begin providing specialized military units to peacekeeping missions as well. As a small country with limited resources, it found especially useful the regular briefings and reports given to troop-contributing countries by the DPKO Situation Centre.

25. Croatia had been offering training courses to peacekeepers from emerging troop-contributing countries, 20 of which, from all parts of the world, had thus far participated. Croatia had also contributed to the e-learning courses that the United Nations had devised for African peacekeepers. Aware of the importance of a strong police presence in peacekeeping missions, Croatia was increasing its police contribution and was patterning its own police courses for participants from other Member States on the United Nations police training. Moreover, his Government was encouraging female candidates from its armed forces and police forces to apply for participation in United Nations peacekeeping operations, and currently 7 per cent of the personnel it deployed were women.

26. It was in the common interest that the aims of peacekeeping should not be compromised in any way. Therefore, Croatia fully supported the work of the Ad Hoc Committee on criminal accountability of United Nations officials and experts on mission, which should result in the strict implementation of a zero-tolerance policy for any misconduct.

27. **Mr. Sangqu** (South Africa) said that his delegation welcomed the Secretariat's support for the enhancement of African peacekeeping operations through the development of generic planning and management capacities and the provision of technical

support to the African Union. Recognizing the importance of partnership in peacekeeping, it supported all efforts to establish a focal point for cooperation between the United Nations and African Union and closer partnerships with regional organizations. In addition to capacity-building, cooperation should focus on funding and logistics, which were two areas of weakness in African peacekeeping. At the same time, it was important to bear in mind that the maintenance of international peace and security was the primary responsibility of the United Nations.

28. Recognizing the challenges of multidimensional peacekeeping, his delegation supported the efforts to link peacekeeping with a broad peacebuilding strategy and looked forward to discussions on the interaction between the Peacebuilding Commission and DPKO. Disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and security-sector reform were the pillars of effective peacebuilding and also contributed to sustainable post-conflict reconstruction. Emphasis should also be put on supporting political processes, and peacekeeping operations must be in consonance with the purposes and goals of the Charter of the United Nations. His delegation supported the Secretary-General's proposed reform measures and was of the view that concepts and terminology should reflect changing circumstances on the ground. In that connection, it looked forward to further discussions on the draft "capstone doctrine", which would provide guiding principles and standard operating procedures for peacekeeping operations.

29. The safety and security of United Nations and associated personnel in the field needed to be strengthened. His delegation was encouraged by the sharing and management of information in the field. It was important to draw lessons from previous security incidents and the Department should carry out an evaluation of all incidents. With regard to staffing concerns, the Department should continue its efforts to address the imbalance of geographical representation, gender distribution and representation of unrepresented Member States. In particular, the Department should have proportionate representation from troop-contributing and police-contributing countries. Given the nature and sensitivity of cases involving sexual exploitation and abuse, his delegation fully supported mandatory training in those areas for all categories of peacekeeping personnel. It reiterated its support for the zero-tolerance policy.

30. **Mr. Al-Otmi** (Yemen) said that the recent increase in the peacekeeping budget and the number of missions indicated that not enough effort was being devoted to development, education, health and agriculture. Peacekeeping operations were not permanent solutions to conflicts. Instead, the community of nations should channel more economic aid and technical assistance to those regions of the world mired in backwardness and poverty. Doing so would address the true causes of conflict and spare Member States the vast sums of money being spent on peacekeeping operations.

31. The peaceful resolution of conflicts depended on the application of the principles of preventive diplomacy, including respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of States, non-interference in States' internal affairs, addressing the root causes of conflict, and application of the Charter of the United Nations to all.

32. In order for the "capstone doctrine" to fulfil its purpose, it should garner the greatest possible support from Member States. Thus it was important that the Secretariat, in drafting that doctrine, should take into account the concerns of troop-contributing countries, pay special attention to the terms used in the doctrine and emphasize that force should be used only in self-defence.

33. The success of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) depended on the success of the political process, which in turn required the full participation of all parties to the conflict. He also stressed that all missions should have clear mandates and enjoy logistic, financial and political support.

34. In conclusion, he said that his country supported a zero-tolerance policy in respect of acts of sexual abuse and exploitation committed by United Nations peacekeepers. All accusations of such abuse and exploitation should be investigated fully.

35. **Ms. Mtamboh** (Zambia) said that her delegation called for the strengthening of security-management procedures developed by the Department of Safety and Security and DPKO and looked forward to the finalization and approval by the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations of a security policy on military observers, staff officers and police officers deployed in an individual capacity. Given that peacekeeping was the flagship of the United Nations,

all peacekeeping personnel must behave in a manner that preserved the image, credibility, impartiality and integrity of the Organization. Her Government would continue to assist in enforcing all standards aimed at eradicating sexual exploitation and abuse.

36. In the context of the reform, peacekeeping personnel were required to develop specific skills in order to deliver support services. Her country called for further assistance with training and capacity-building in order to improve its representation at the professional level in peacekeeping operations. However, training alone did not prevent the marginalization of the developing countries, and the Department should ensure that selection systems were based on merit and incorporated geographical representation. There was need for greater cooperation between the Department, the Security Council and the troop-contributing countries, which should have a greater say in decision-making relating to peacekeeping.

37. Although the General Assembly had emphasized the importance of expediting the settlement of death and disability claims, her country continued to face problems in that regard. Some claims had been pending for years because supporting documents had not been provided by the Organization. Her delegation called for claim procedures to be simplified in order to enable early settlement.

38. **Mr. Chidyausiku** (Zimbabwe) said that it was essential to address the problem of understaffing in both DPKO and DFS in order to benefit from the reform. In particular, the post of Under-Secretary-General for Field Support should be filled expeditiously. His delegation called on the Secretariat to recruit and fill all vacancies in a transparent and professional manner in order to ensure that the best candidates were selected on the basis of equitable geographical representation at Headquarters and in the field.

39. Zimbabwe was a regular contributor to peacekeeping operations and had deployed military and police observers to six peacekeeping missions. It had consistently pledged troops and equipment to the standby-arrangements system and would continue to increase its pledges in support of peacekeeping operations. The Regional Peacekeeping Training Centre in Harare trained peacekeepers for future deployment using South African Development Community resources. His delegation believed that the Integrated Training Service should interest itself in that initiative. It was important that the draft "capstone doctrine" should be finalized through wide-ranging consultations. With regard to reports of cases of sexual exploitation and abuse, his delegation reiterated its strong commitment to the zero-tolerance policy. A concerted effort was required in order to end such acts of misconduct. In addition, the success of all peacekeeping operations called for the close cooperation of all stakeholders, including the United Nations and its agencies as well as the troop-contributing and police-contributing countries.

40. **Mr. Bu Dhhair** (Kuwait) said that, in order to increase the effectiveness of United Nations peacekeeping missions, those missions should be given clear and precise mandates. Effective leadership structures and increased cooperation between the United Nations and the troop-contributing countries and organizations would also help to enhance their effectiveness.

41. He expressed his appreciation to the European Union and the African Union for their constructive support and exemplary cooperation. His delegation was also satisfied with the support and cooperation that Member States had provided to the Organization as it sought to enhance its peacekeeping abilities.

42. He commended the United Nations for its role in maintaining boundary markers between Kuwait and Iraq pursuant to Security Council resolution 833 (1993). For its part, Kuwait had implemented the recommendations contained in the technical report by removing all obstacles and creating conditions conducive to the work of the relevant United Nations bodies. While his country was pleased with Iraq's cooperation in the matter, he urged it to make greater efforts to remove obstacles on its side of the border so as to ease further the maintenance of boundary markers.

43. Although Kuwait's share of the peacekeeping budget had increased fivefold over the preceding few years, it had continued to meet its obligations completely and in a timely fashion and urged other countries to do likewise. His delegation condemned actions that threatened United Nations peacekeeping personnel, who were risking their lives in the service of peace, and urged that everything possible should be done to ensure their safety.

44. **Mr. Choi** Sung-soo (Republic of Korea) said that the unprecedented surge in the number and scope of peacekeeping operations and the broad support of the international community were clear evidence of the Organization's crucial role in maintaining global peace and security. His delegation was of the view that cooperation between the United Nations and regional and international organizations was a key factor in addressing peace and security issues. Cooperation should extend to all stakeholders, including major financial contributors, in the form of regular consultation. With regard to the reported cases of sexual exploitation and abuse, his delegation strongly supported the zero-tolerance policy and advocated increasing the responsibility of commanding officers for the misconduct of their personnel. His delegation welcomed the adoption of the draft model memorandum of understanding on sexual exploitation and abuse.

45. The success of peacekeeping missions depended to some degree on the rapid deployment of peacekeeping forces. His delegation would like to see constructive engagement with all troop-contributing countries in order to strengthen operational capacity, especially for rapid reaction. Having itself benefited from United Nations peacebuilding support, the Republic of Korea had made it a priority to contribute well-trained and disciplined troops to peacekeeping operations and had participated in 14 such operations. In addition, his delegation commended the efforts of the Secretariat to reform and strengthen peacekeeping operations through the restructuring of DPKO.

46. **Ms. Ziade** (Lebanon) said that her delegation attached great importance to the reform aimed at strengthening United Nations peacekeeping capacities. She commended the efforts made to enable the Organization to undertake increasingly difficult and complex missions.

47. Lebanon had a long relationship with United Nations peacekeeping, starting in 1948 and continuing through 1978 with the deployment of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), which continued to play a vital role in reducing very dangerous tensions despite repeated Israeli aggression against its personnel and various difficulties which, at times, had prevented it from fulfilling its mandate.

48. After the Security Council had broadened its mandate in 2006, UNIFIL had helped the Government to re-establish its authority over all Lebanese territory. The composition of that force — nearly 14,000 troops from 30 countries and with the most modern equipment — testified to the international community's commitment to peacekeeping and to the cause of Lebanon. Working in close cooperation with the Lebanese Army, UNIFIL troops had also succeeded in making human connections with the communities in which they were deployed. Their presence was reassuring and had contributed to the economic revitalization of the region.

49. In conclusion, she thanked the countries that had contributed troops and strongly condemned the attack against UNIFIL in June 2007 in which six peacekeepers had been killed.

50. **Mr. Matenje** (Malawi) noted with great concern that huge amounts of money that could have been used for the benefit of millions of people, particularly in the least developed countries, were being spent on peacekeeping operations arising from preventable conflicts. His delegation joined those calling for the allocation of adequate resources for conflict prevention, and was therefore pleased to learn that the importance of conflict prevention and peacebuilding would be addressed by the Secretary-General in an upcoming report.

51. Turning to the need for reform of United Nations working methods, he said that the Security Council should work more cooperatively with the other United Nations organs, and should engage Governments more in its decision-making. The goal of economic prosperity for all could hardly be achieved if the Security Council worked in isolation and failed to address poverty and underdevelopment, which were the root causes of conflict.

52. Malawi counted itself among the countries that had already contributed troops and police to United Nations peacekeeping operations in a variety of locations, and had recently pledged to participate in the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID). In furtherance of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), Malawi was including women among its peacekeepers, as true peace could not be achieved without them. The employment of women as well as men in strategic positions would also enable DPKO and DFS to address the problem of sexual violence and exploitation in areas of conflict and during peacekeeping and peacebuilding operations, and

ensure that the perpetrators of such acts were duly punished.

53. **Mr. Eboutou** (Cameroon) said that, in any peacekeeping operation, there was a need to respect the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of States, to refrain from interfering in their internal affairs, and for DPKO to work closely with the troop-contributing countries. He welcomed the Department's initiative in drafting the "capstone doctrine", and expressed the hope that all Member States would have the opportunity to participate in the consultations on it.

54. To prevent the recurrence of conflict, it was essential that peacekeeping operations included disarmament, demobilization and reintegration. He also called for prompt reimbursement of troop-contributing countries, greater attention to the protection, security and training of peacekeeping personnel, and the speedy finalization of the memorandum of understanding on the administration, logistics and financing of materiel and services for peacekeeping operations as well as on standards of conduct for peacekeeping personnel. Moreover, the training of peacekeeping personnel should be multidisciplinary in nature, addressing ethical and disciplinary as well as professional and operational issues.

55. With the assistance of donor countries, Cameroon had launched a project to create a training programme for peacekeeping operations in order to provide training under United Nations auspices for police officers from African countries. He expressed his Government's gratitude for the support given by countries and organizations for the initiative. In addition to that programme, Cameroon's commitment to peacekeeping was illustrated by the participation of its personnel in numerous operations around the world, and notably by its willingness to take part in the upcoming multilateral United Nations and European Union operation in Chad, the Central African Republic and the Sudan.

56. **Ms. Pellandini** (Observer for the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)) said that the increasing breadth, integration and dangerous nature of United Nations peacekeeping operations highlighted the importance of developing a coherent framework for them, and expressed her organization's availability to share its expertise on matters of common interest. Interaction between ICRC and the United Nations had developed considerably, particularly with regard to operational issues and the promotion of and training in international law. It was extremely important for United Nations peacekeepers to be fully acquainted with and adhere scrupulously to the rules of international humanitarian law and other relevant bodies of law.

57. ICRC was confident that the guiding documents drafted in the framework of the DPKO reform would stipulate a clear commitment to respecting and ensuring respect for international humanitarian law and would include proper references to it. Additionally, subordinate documents such as rules of engagement, standard operating procedures and guidelines and manuals as well as standards of education and training for United Nations peacekeepers should adequately integrate international humanitarian law references when appropriate. The relevant United Nations documents should also require that the necessary steps be taken to ensure that the role and activities of ICRC were respected, facilitated and well understood by all participants in peacekeeping operations. Her organization stood ready to lend its support and expertise for the training of United Nations peacekeepers in international humanitarian law.

58. In the light of the increasing tendency to incorporate the protection of the civilian population as a standard element of peacekeeping operations, ICRC considered that the military and security dimension of United Nations peacekeepers' protection activities should be clearly distinguished from the protection activities conducted by humanitarian actors, and underlined the need to preserve neutral, impartial and independent humanitarian action aimed solely at assisting and protecting victims according to their needs. For the success of humanitarian work and the safety of the personnel involved, it was essential that political or military operations, including those carried out under United Nations auspices, should not erode the neutrality of humanitarian operations.

59. **Mr. Belkheir** (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) said that, in reviewing peacekeeping operations, it was also important to try to find political and diplomatic solutions involving the parties in conflict, if possible before peacekeeping troops were dispatched. He thanked the Sudan for its contributions to the peace process, and called on all Member States to exert influence on those still under arms to participate in negotiations and put an end to the conflict there.

60. **The Chairman** said that the agenda item would remain open, and that the Committee would meet in 2008 to consider the report of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations and adopt the relevant draft resolution submitted under that item.

The meeting rose at 5.20 p.m.

United Nations A/C.4/62/SR.17

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Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

Summary record of the 17th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 6 November 2007, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. Mohamad ..... (Sudan)

Contents

Agenda item 29: Assistance in mine action

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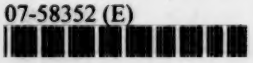

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda item 29: Assistance in mine action (A/62/307; A/C.4/62/L.6)

1. **Mr. Harland** (Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO)), introducing the item, recalled that the United Nations Mine Action Service was responsible for coordinating the activities of the United Nations Mine Action Team. The year 2007 marked the tenth anniversary of the 1997 Ottawa Convention on the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction and the creation of the Mine Action Service. He noted that 155 States had ratified or acceded to the Convention and that most other States nevertheless largely respected its principles.

2. As indicated in the Secretary-General's report (A/62/307), the coordinated approach to mine action adopted by the United Nations system and its partners in the field and at Headquarters had led to a number of achievements. Over the past 10 years some 40 million stockpiled anti-personnel mines had been destroyed and their production, sale and transfer had almost stopped. Casualty levels had declined, vast areas of suspect lands had been deemed mine free and national capacity to manage mine-action programmes had been increased. Mine action had been linked to development and reconstruction planning, and progress had been made in advancing gender equality and the rights of persons with disabilities across the mine-action sector. Much remained to be done, however, and he therefore welcomed the recommendations on a forward-looking mine-action agenda contained in the report of the Secretary-General on assistance in mine action (A/62/307).

3. Turning to the United Nations Inter-Agency Mine Action Strategy for 2006-2010 (ibid., chap. III), he noted with regard to Strategic Objective 1 (Reduction of death and injury by at least 50 per cent) that marking and fencing and mine clearance and education reduced death and injury. Mine-risk education increasingly targeted the most at-risk populations and better data made it easier to identify and manage the relatively small percentage of land areas that posed the highest risk. The number of countries reporting casualties and also the number of casualties had declined substantially since 2003. In addition to mine-action activities, affected States could take other measures, such as Cambodia's efforts to curtail the scrap-metal trade to significantly reduce casualty rates.

4. As for Strategic Objective 2 (Mitigation of the risk to community livelihoods and expansion of freedom of movement for at least 80 per cent of the most seriously affected communities), he said that, in cooperation with Governments and partners, only areas that showed evidence of contamination were targeted for clearing based on a prioritization system that reflected their impact on the surrounding community. As a result, clearance efforts had been concentrated where most needed and extensive areas of land had been returned to productive use. In Angola, for example, surveying activities had reduced the estimated percentage of mine-affected land from about 20 to 30 per cent to less than 1 per cent. A total of 6.3 million square metres of land had been released back to communities and 82 communities had been declared free of mines.

5. Referring to Strategic Objective 3 (Integration of mine-action needs into national development and reconstruction plans and budgets in at least 15 countries), he said that 13 countries had in fact integrated mine action into their national development plans and budgets. Mine action was a sound investment with appreciable development returns in such areas as health, education and livelihoods. Integration of mine action into development budgets ensured funding, including increased funding from Governments themselves, which enhanced national ownership and institutional support.

6. Lastly, with regard to Strategic Objective 4 (Assistance for the development of national institutions to manage the landmine/explosive-remnants-of-war threat, and preparation for residual capacity in at least 15 countries), he said that in accordance with the guidelines set out in Mine Action and Effective Coordination: The United Nations Inter-Agency Policy (ibid., para. 3), many countries had gradually assumed full responsibility for clearance activities. A number of programmes would be transferred to full national management over the next few years. Direct technical support was no longer required in such mine-affected countries as Albania, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Yemen, although financial support and access to methodological and technological developments might still be required. Their programmes were effectively independent and capable of sharing lessons learned with other less

developed national programmes. Countries such as Mauritania and Senegal were well on their way towards developing national programmes with United Nations support.

7. He welcomed draft resolution A/C.4/62/L.6 on assistance in mine action, which demonstrated the Committee's support for mine action while clearly acknowledging the primary responsibility of States, and strengthened the international commitment to mainstream mine action into development planning and to promote efficiency in mine-clearance activities. He also welcomed the support provided in the draft resolution for efforts to advance gender equality in mine action and its recognition of the contribution mine action made to post-conflict confidence-building. The Mine Action Guidelines for Ceasefire and Peace Agreements (ibid., para. 24) had for example been distributed to peacemakers engaged in discussions with the parties to the conflict in Nepal and the peace agreement of December 2006 contained provisions related to mine action.

8. The United Nations Mine Action Team was continuously evaluating its efforts and working with partners to identify lessons learned. The expertise and commitment of stakeholders and the support of Member States and other entities would help the Team create a world free of the threat of landmines and explosive remnants of war, where the needs of victims were met and they were integrated into their societies, and where individuals and communities lived in a safe environment conducive to development.

9. **Mr. Costa Pereira** (Portugal), speaking on behalf of the European Union, asked what could be done to increase the Organization's rapid-response capability and what measures were being undertaken to reduce the alarmingly high number of child casualties.

10. **The Chairman** requested more information on the legal framework governing mine action, for example whether that framework consisted of mainly peacekeeping and humanitarian-related endeavours, as well as whether such a legal framework was desirable and necessary.

11. **Mr. Harland** (Department of Peacekeeping Operations) replied that the legal framework for mine action consisted mainly of a loose "architecture" of, for example, Security Council resolutions dealing with post-conflict situations and the mandates for various United Nations activities. The central question was whether the existing system could ensure coherent and effective action. The proof that it was effective was that large areas of land were being cleared and the casualty rate was dropping rapidly. Although the legal framework could no doubt be improved, the progress made could be attributed to well-coordinated international action.

12. Turning to the questions from the representative of Portugal, he said that the key to rapid response, other than timely allocation of resources, was preparation. The Organization already had a good rapid-response capability; the Department organized an annual exercise in Sweden in cooperation with the Swedish authorities, NGOs and Member States to simulate complex situations, improve procedures and strengthen ties among participants. With regard to resources, he cited the very different situations in 2006 in South Lebanon and in Guinea-Bissau. In Guinea-Bissau, a relatively minor and low-profile situation, resources had had to be "cobbled together" from the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), a process which had taken time and delayed response. In the more high-profile situation in South Lebanon, voluntary contributions had been made available swiftly and contractors had been on the ground within two weeks of the end of hostilities.

13. He said that preventive and educational measures and warnings played an important role in avoiding child casualties. Concrete steps had been taken to assist all members of mine-affected communities, including children under 18. In compliance with the International Mine Action Standards, mine education was made context-specific, taking into account the needs of affected communities. Sex and age-disaggregated data on victims was analysed to improve planning, risk-reduction and education activities. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention collected data on victims so that mine-action practitioners could better target risk-reduction activities. The Organization had many child-oriented activities: UNICEF country officers for example, in cooperation with Governments in more than 20 countries, worked to help reduce the number of child casualties. He stressed that mine clearance played an important role in reducing the number of child victims. In that context, he supported the Secretary-General's call (ibid., para. 60 (d)) for the adoption by

the end of 2008 of an effective legally binding instrument on cluster munitions.

14. **Mr. Kodera** (Japan) said that his delegation's policy on mine action was based on the principles of peacebuilding, human security and strengthened cooperation among Governments, NGOs, the private sector and academia. Since announcing its policy on mine action in 2004, his Government had allocated an average of $3.8 million a year to mine-action activities, rising to $4 million in 2006.

15. In the area of peacebuilding, his Government provided assistance to improve security and safety in post-conflict countries. For example, it had provided funds to train personnel of the Iraqi National Mine Action Authority in information-management systems. With regard to human security, he recalled that the Trust Fund for Human Security had been established at his delegation's initiative and said that his Government contributed to projects that empowered individuals faced with such threats as mines and small arms. In the Sudan, for example, it had helped fund mine-risk education and victim-assistance activities. In the area of cooperation, especially with regard to mine-detection and mine-clearance equipment to be used in Afghanistan, Croatia and Cambodia, the Government encouraged exchanges of information with a view to meeting the needs of the recipient countries.

16. Japan pledged its continuing support for the Zero Victims Programme. To that end it would make contributions for grass-roots human-security projects and would also share its expertise in the development of mine-detection and mine-clearance equipment.

17. **Ms. Al-Haideri** (Iraq) said that, despite United Nations mine action, some 15,000 to 20,000 people around the world, mostly women, children and the elderly, were killed or maimed every year by landmines and unexploded ordnance.

18. In 2003, Iraq had established a national mine-action authority responsible for the removal of all landmines and the explosive remnants of three decades of war. Iraq had also acceded to the Ottawa Convention.

19. **Mr. Perazza** (Uruguay), speaking on behalf of the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR), said that, in view of the perverse and indiscriminate nature of anti-personnel landmines, MERCOSUR and associated countries were committed to fulfilling their obligations under the Ottawa Convention. In that context, they had participated in a number of regional mine-action initiatives, including the Programme of Integral Action against Anti-personnel Mines in Central America of the Organization of American States. MERCOSUR also welcomed the establishment of the Regional Support Centre for Humanitarian Demining in Santiago, Chile, whose main task was to support operation planning through an information-management system for mine action.

20. Notwithstanding recent progress in mine action, much work remained to be done and States parties to the Convention faced many impediments, including climatic factors, topography and lack of resources, which had prevented them from destroying all anti-personnel mines within the prescribed 10-year period. It was important that States parties should finalize the application process for extensions during their meeting to be held in Amman later in November 2007.

21. Since the granting of extensions would entail additional implementation costs, donor States should stand ready to fulfil their commitments, and civil society and relevant international organizations should continue to play their essential roles. In that connection, Chile, in cooperation with Norway, had organized a seminar in Santiago in August 2007 on the implementation of the Convention.

22. All Latin American countries affected by the scourge of mines, along with representatives of relevant international organizations and civil society, had participated in that seminar. In addition to renewing their moral and political commitment to the principles of the Convention, the participants had identified factors that impeded implementation, and had underscored the importance of extensions as a means of achieving full compliance with its requirements.

23. One of the greatest challenges was caring for the victims of mines. Member States should ensure that their health and educations systems, social services and legal frameworks adequately addressed the victims' needs. In that connection, MERCOSUR welcomed the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Its early entry into force would contribute significantly to improving the quality of life of mine victims.

24. The donor community also had an important role to play in strengthening the State structures of

countries plagued by mines. In that regard, donors should be mindful of and abide by their obligations while taking into account the needs of victims and ensuring that progress could be objectively measured.

25. Mine action, in addition to being a legal obligation for States parties to the Ottawa Convention, was an ethical and moral imperative for all Member States.

26. **Ms. Hernández Toledano** (Cuba) said that while her country welcomed international efforts to address the harm inflicted by mines on civilian populations, it remained concerned by the inefficiency of mine clearing in post-conflict situations.

27. Recalling her country's policy to use anti-personnel mines exclusively for defence, she said the Cuban authorities had implemented strict regulations in respect of the use of such mines. Furthermore, at no time had Cuba ever exported mines. The defensive use of mines stemmed from the Cuban people's will to defend its sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity from armed aggression.

28. Cuba had made numerous practical contributions to international efforts to address the harm caused by the indiscriminate use of mines. Hundreds of its doctors were currently treating persons injured by mines in various parts of Africa, Asia and Central America.

29. More emphasis should be placed on international cooperation and the timely mobilization of resources both for demining activities and for assistance to mine victims. States that had planted mines in other States' territories were legally and politically obliged to assist in demining and in helping the victims. The United Nations, for its part, should continue to help mine-affected States develop their national capacities for demining and victim rehabilitation as part of its comprehensive development strategy.

30. Although reaching an agreement on a draft resolution had been made difficult by the insistence of certain delegations on language that distorted its purpose, the resolution nonetheless was designed to address the humanitarian aspects without detriment to the legitimate interests of States in matters of disarmament and national security. She stressed that preserving a balance between the humanitarian and national-security dimensions of mine usage had thus far allowed the Committee to reach a consensus on the draft and that any breach of that balance would lead to the breakdown of the consensus.

31. In the future, she hoped that the draft resolution would focus strictly on the humanitarian dimensions and on mine assistance; it was for such bodies as the First Committee to review other aspects of mine action.

32. **Mr. Sangchai** (Thailand) said that, as a country affected by mines, Thailand had mainstreamed mine action into national policies. The National Committee on Humanitarian Mine Action, chaired by the Prime Minister, acted as the focal point of all relevant national agencies and coordinated key mine-action activities, including demining, mine-risk education, victim assistance, assessment of mine-action results and cooperation with partners. In addition, the Thailand Mine Action Center had been established in 1999 to strengthen mine-clearance capacities, provide mine-risk education and promote coordination and cooperation among agencies, civil society and NGOs. The Government had increased the number of participants in risk-education programmes and had systematically provided assistance to mine victims.

33. Under the direction of the Thailand Mine Action Center and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, joint demining actions had been carried out with the support of partner countries such as Japan, the United States and China. As a result, many mine-affected areas, especially along the Thai borders, had been converted into agricultural, trading and tourism zones. His country reiterated its pledge to continue with efforts to implement the Ottawa Convention. The Government had approved a substantial financial package to support mine action. Thus, the Thailand Mine Action Center would be able to intensify demining activities in the most affected areas, raise public awareness, establish safety lanes, erect fences and promote further cooperation for the rehabilitation of mine victims. To that end, two five-year plans had been established at the national level: the Master Plan for Mine Victim Assistance and the Master Plan on Mine Risk Education.

34. **Ms. Song** Danhui (China) said that her Government supported efforts to address the concerns of mine-affected countries, and was dedicated to cooperation in demining.

35. China believed that the Amended Protocol II to the 1980 Convention on Conventional Weapons struck the proper balance between humanitarian concerns and

the legitimate military needs of States. In addressing the humanitarian concerns, it was of vital importance to enhance the universality of that Protocol and preserve its authoritativeness. Since acceding to that Protocol, China had strictly abided by its provisions. The Chinese military had carried out technical modifications of obsolete stockpiled anti-personnel landmines to make sure that those in service met the technical requirements of the Protocol. By carrying out two large-scale demining operations in border areas in the 1990s, China had almost eliminated landmine threats on its own territory.

36. China respected the decision of the States parties to the Ottawa Convention to address the humanitarian concerns by means of a comprehensive ban. Although not a State party, China endorsed the objectives of the Convention, and had voted in favour of its implementation in the First Committee.

37. China also attached great importance to international assistance in mine action. Since 1998, the Chinese Government had participated in demining operations in more than 10 countries in Asia and Africa by providing financial donations and demining equipment, dispatching peacekeeping engineering troops and demining experts, and hosting demining-training courses. Chinese peacekeeping engineering troops in Lebanon had received demining certification from the United Nations and were clearing landmines and unexploded ordnance.

38. The Chinese Government pledged its continued participation in demining in Africa, and would provide demining assistance to mine-affected African countries. China was hosting a demining-training course in Nanjing, China, for demining personnel from five mine-affected African countries, and would also donate some demining equipment to those countries.

39. Welcoming the role played in recent years by international mine action in reducing mine threats and promoting development in many countries, she said that China was ready to continue to cooperate closely with all parties to resolve the humanitarian concerns associated with landmines.

40. **Mr. Godinho** (Portugal), speaking on behalf of the European Union; the candidate countries Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey; the stabilization and association process countries Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro; and, in addition, Armenia, Moldova and Ukraine, said that during the course of the previous decade remarkable progress had been made towards eliminating anti-personnel mines. However, the European Union was deeply concerned that, every year, thousands of innocent civilians, including children, were claimed by landmines and other explosive remnants of war. It was important to address both old and emerging threats, including reducing the risks posed by cluster munitions.

41. Support for international mine action continued to be among the most important political priorities of the European Union, with financial support totalling approximately 1.5 billion euros since 1997. The European Union was the largest single contributor to both the United Nations and the International Committee of the Red Cross for funds related to mine action. An important goal for the European Union was universalization of the Ottawa Convention, and it welcomed the commitment of States parties to pursue full implementation of that instrument. However, it should be noted that 40 States were not yet party to the Convention and approximately 65 countries were affected by anti-personnel landmines and explosive remnants of war.

42. Clearly, the international community must continue to support mine-action programmes, in both political and financial terms. Despite the importance of mine clearance and stockpile destruction, the European Union believed that emphasis should focus more on victim assistance and mine-risk education. In addition, affected countries should be assisted in fulfilling their obligations under international law, including the Convention. The European Union would continue to focus on national capacity-building with the primary objective of enhancing mine-action-management capacity with affected countries. The European Union supported the integration of mine action into development plans and budgets in order to ensure sustainability of essential initiatives and development of national capacities for the future. The integration of mine action into peacekeeping operations and mandates was also of critical importance.

43. Joint efforts must continue to be pursued by mine-affected countries, donor Governments, regional institutions, NGOs and United Nations bodies. Cooperation and coordination among actors was crucial in order to avoid duplication and to ensure the most effective utilization of resources, building on national capacity where possible. The European Union

remained committed to moving forward with determination in order to eliminate anti-personnel landmines and other explosive remnants of war within the next 10 to 15 years.

44. **Mr. Abdelaziz** (Egypt) said that his country attached great importance to assistance in mine action because mines and explosive remnants of war continued to kill civilians and impeded the exploitation of natural resources. Detecting and clearing the more than 20 million mines spread out over a vast area of Egyptian territory required enormous resources and severely impeded development.

45. The humanitarian aspect was equally serious. Since 1982, there had been more than 8,500 casualties, including at least 700 deaths, in the desert areas of Egypt. On average, more than 50 mine explosions were recorded every year, not to mention the countless number that went unreported. In that connection, the National Human Rights Council, in cooperation with UNDP, had organized an international conference, chaired by former Secretary-General Mr. Boutros-Ghali, on development and mine-clearance from the northwest coast.

46. Among the outcomes of that conference was a call for developed countries and international organizations to provide Egypt with the necessary mine-clearance expertise and technology. The participants had also called for the establishment of a special fund for demining that region, to be financed partly by the States parties to the Second World War.

47. Egypt, despite its full support for the Ottawa Convention, had not been able to accede to that instrument because of the requirement that States parties should clear their territories of mines within a specific period of time. That requirement was impossible to meet, owing to his country's limited resources and to the paucity of assistance provided by the States that had planted the mines. There was also a lack of maps showing their exact location or their displacement from their original location over the years.

48. Several years earlier, Egypt had announced a moratorium on the export of mines, and in 1988 had ceased all mine production. It also participated as an observer in all the main meetings of the States parties to the Convention and would continue to do so until it found that acceding to the Convention would be in its national interest.

49. **Ms. Phan Thi Kim Hong** (Viet Nam) said that mines and explosive remnants of war had created significant obstacles to development in a number of countries. Over 15 million tons of bombs and explosive devices had been used in Viet Nam, and the daily life of the people was still threatened by scattered mines and explosive remnants. An estimated 350,000 to 800,000 tons of unexploded ordnance remained scattered in the country.

50. Every year, despite invaluable assistance from over 35 international and non-governmental organizations for mine clearance, mine-risk education and protection to victims, the Government still had to provide a large budget for mine action. Her Government looked forward to continued cooperation and assistance from international and non-governmental organizations with a view to completing the task of clearing the mines and unexploded ordnance.

51. **Mr. Riofrío** (Ecuador) said that his country and Peru had begun a unique joint mine-clearance operation on their border following the signing of the peace agreement in 1998. In June 2007, the Presidents of the two countries had reiterated their commitment to continue to develop joint technical and financial assistance. In addition, with the support of the Governments of Canada, Norway, the United States, Japan and Italy, the European Union and other regional bodies, an area of Ecuadorian territory had been cleared of mines; however, it represented less than half the area affected.

52. As permitted under the Ottawa Convention, Ecuador kept only 1,000 mines for training purposes. With the support of the Organization of American States, Ecuador had provided medical care and rehabilitation to mine victims. The adoption of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities would also provide support to a number of mine victims. He stressed, however, that mine action undertaken by the developing countries would be successful only with the continued support of the international community.

53. **Mr. Bahadur** (Nepal) said that the proliferation of landmines had affected agricultural economies, shattered socio-economic development and torn the fabric of societies. Continued exposure to mines displaced populations, fuelling further conflict and intensifying hunger and poverty.

54. As a country emerging from a decade of armed conflict, Nepal was intensely aware of the effects of mines and other explosives. Though Nepal had yet to accede to the Ottawa Convention, it supported international commitments to control the production, transfer and deployment of excessively injurious weapons, including mines.

55. Mine clearance was an aspect of the comprehensive peace agreement between the Government of Nepal and the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) in 2006. The United Nations Mission in Nepal (UNMIN) had supported the Government in that action, and was sharing information on safe storage and mine clearance. The Government was also working with UNMIN to improve national capacity in mine clearance, and had decided to set up a mine action authority, with a view to freeing Nepal from the scourge of mines.

56. There was a need for enhanced technical assistance in modern mine-action technology. He commended the initiative of NGOs in their advocacy of risk education and for creating an international climate conducive to banning mines. Nepal pledged to work with the United Nations system in reducing the impact of landmines on populations and people's livelihoods.

57. **Mr. Khammanichanh** (Lao People's Democratic Republic) said that, although tremendous efforts had been undertaken to remove mines and unexploded ordnance, much remained to be done, especially in the area of victim assistance. With more than 80 countries contaminated by explosive remnants of war, there were hundreds of new victims every day. To build a safer environment and to meet survivors' needs, every effort should be made to enhance international assistance.

58. As the most heavily bombed country per capita in the world, nowhere were the lasting impacts of unexploded ordnance more evident than in the Lao People's Democratic Republic. Nearly 3 million tons of bombs had been dropped on its territory during the Indochina conflict. Up to 30 per cent of that ordnance, including millions of cluster bomblets, had failed to detonate, leaving as many as 78 million unexploded bomblets littering the landscape. Of the 17 provinces in Laos, 15 remained contaminated, with hundreds of new victims each year, more than 40 per cent of whom were children. That scourge was also hampering the development of the country, and had constrained its capacity to live up to its international commitments, including poverty eradication and sustainable development.

59. A trust fund had been established in 1995 and the Lao National Unexploded Ordnance Programme had been launched in 1996 with the support of UNDP, UNICEF and donor countries. It had accomplished much to date. However, the challenge was to clear more contaminated land for agricultural production and other socio-economic activities, as well as to assist survivors and their families and reduce the number of civilian casualties. The Government had also set up a national regulatory authority to plan, oversee and coordinate all mine action in the country.

60. Expressing gratitude to all donor countries and organizations for their generous support, he earnestly hoped that greater aid would be forthcoming. Experience had shown, however, that mine clearance alone was insufficient. Priority should also be given to assisting victims in affected areas, international cooperation and preventing the proliferation of those weapons.

61. **Mr. Majok** (Sudan) said that his delegation appreciated the support given by the United Nations, donor countries and other stakeholders involved in mine action in the Sudan, and urged them to support capacity-building in order to strengthen national mine-action programmes.

62. The Sudan continued to support the General Assembly's declaration of 4 April as International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action, and was firmly committed to its objectives. The Sudan, as a State party to the Ottawa Convention, was developing a mine-action legislative framework, an institutional framework and operational capacities. Mine-action authorities had been established under the Government of National Unity and the Government of Southern Sudan respectively. Mine action had been included in the national budget. Humanitarian demining training and mine-clearance activities were under way in coordination with the United Nations, and a landmine-impact survey was being carried out. Concurrently, the Government of National Unity was destroying many stockpiled anti-personnel mines, although some would be retained for training purposes.

63. Victim-assistance programmes in the Sudan had been integrated into the overall issue of disability. Existing laws covered all kinds of disabilities, providing transportation, education, health care and

employment. A large rehabilitation centre had been established for war victims, including victims of mines and explosive remnants of war.

64. The Sudan's mine-action programme faced many challenges, including limited funds, logistical and administrative problems entailed by the size of the country, poor coordination among mine-action stakeholders, lack of information on the location and extent of mine-affected areas, and poor national capacity.

The meeting rose at 5.05 p.m.